

Under reconstruction! We apologize for the absence of certain materials.

THE FORMULA OF THE ORANGE VICTORY: NOTES BY CONCERNED OBSERVERS

22 January 2005

History is not divided into centuries. The beginning of each epoch is marked and symbolized by a certain historical event, which decisively influences a nation's or mankind's development. As a rule, such events are wars or revolutions. Both change drastically the course of nations' and even civilizations' development. The end of the 19th century was marked by the Boer War and the war between Spain and the USA. The dawn of the 20th century was marked by WW I and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia.

In Ukraine, the third millennium began with the so-called "orange revolution," which actually was a movement of popular protest against the hateful, anti-democratic regime. Two-thirds of Ukrainians consider it to be the most significant event of the past year. And there are grounds to expect this revolution to become the title page of Europe's newest history.

Of course, the history, outcome, and consequences of the Ukrainian presidential campaign of 2004 and its culmination - the orange revolution - will be subjected to in-depth studies later on. But while the impressions and emotions are still fresh, the authors would like to share their opinions about some peculiarities of this election race.

Yushchenko's Campaign - A Unique Experience

The best word to characterize Yushchenko's election campaign is "unique," the word he uses so often. What makes this campaign unique? Above all, it was victorious despite all drawbacks and errors, and it was won by an opposition leader - a unique case for the entire post-Soviet era.

It did not come easily. We can remember the utterances made by Leonid Kuchma's chief of staff, Viktor Medvedchuk, who said that the authorities were "strong as never before." We can remember what the then Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich said in a TV debate with Yushchenko: "A new authority has come and it can't be forced out." As it turned out, the authorities were not that strong - all it took was a little joint effort.

The Baltic countries could hardly serve as an example, because such political practice is nothing strange for those nations. All former USSR republics can be divided into two categories: those where authoritarian regimes were window-dressed with democratic values and those where adherence to democratic values became a real basis for their statehood.

Ukraine balanced on the verge between these two worlds. In 1994 it demonstrated to the rest of the former USSR an example of a civilized transfer of presidential powers. In 1999, the evolved government managed to pose an artificial choice before Ukrainian voters: between re-electing Leonid Kuchma and electing Communist Petro Symonenko. The people hated to return to the old Communist regime and so had no other way but to vote for the lesser evil - Kuchma.

It was no secret that to oppose the authorities meant to expose supporters and business allies to pressure and persecution by law enforcers and criminals. The authorities made the most of this principle during the 2004 election campaign. But none of the powers that be had ever imagined that such a great lot of people would stand up to protest, that the army and police would join the people, that rank-and-file police officers, at their own initiative, would begin to arrest bandits in defiance of orders from their seniors.

Yushchenko's campaign was unique because he conducted it in a total media blockade and still won - a notable exception from the general post-USSR rule (except for the Baltic countries).

As the experience of parliamentary and presidential elections shows, television plays the key role among the mechanisms of electoral influence. During the presidential campaign in Ukraine, central TV channels were the main source of negative information about Yushchenko. Even little children remembered very well the video clips that began with "Viktor, your wife is American..." let alone those grown-ups who have trusted television unconditionally since the Soviet era. With such limited access to media resources, classical techniques of carrying Yushchenko's messages to the voters would not work.

Many supporters asked his election staffers why he did not comment on this or that event, why he did not express his position on this or that issue. The invariable answer was, "Yes, he did comment, he did express his position, but you and many others were just unable to see or hear him."

The people's old habit of trusting whatever the TV shows said did a lot of harm, because the central channels were anything but objective. The situation changed only when millions of people stood up in protest against election fraud, when many media managers and journalists realized that the sinking boat of the old regime could drag them all down. Yushchenko's only media channels were the Internet, a few newspapers, TV Channel 5, and the TV and radio company *Era*.

The pro-Yushchenko TV channels deserve special attention. Some political experts describe them as unthinking instruments of the opposition, which worked as they were told by their owners. The answer is: these TV channels never fulfilled anyone's orders. Their news reports and analytical programs, especially in September and October, were strongly "anti-Yanukovich" rather than "pro-Yushchenko." There were other factors: Channel 5 only broadcast to 48 percent of the country's territory, mostly via cable networks, and with frequent blackouts. *Era* broadcast early in the morning and after 11 p.m., when most viewers went to bed.

The leaflets and special editions of newspapers were made quite professionally and were an effective means of canvassing. But their dissemination in many regions, especially in the east and south of the country, was very problematic. Some local election staffs of both candidates bought each other's leaflets and newspapers "by weight" (Yanukovich's staff offered more money for pro-Yushchenko materials).

On the Internet, which had no government-imposed restrictions, Yushchenko scored an impressive advantage and his canvassing was really competitive. According to polls among Internet users, the overwhelming majority supported Yushchenko. During the orange revolution, Internet use became dozens of times higher, and the most influential pro-opposition websites became real means of forming public opinion, which is a unique fact for Ukraine where the Internet is affordable to a mere 10 percent of citizens.

The Yushchenko election staff effectively used new technologies. The first step was made on September 18, when a mass opposition rally on European Square in Kyiv was transmitted live via satellite to the biggest squares of almost all regional centers, the venues of similar rallies. There were problems, of course: the signal did not reach some destinations, and some cities had blackouts and no standby generators. But on the whole, the complex project was coordinated very well, and a considerable number of Ukrainians were able to see and hear Yushchenko.

During the orange revolution the Yushchenko staff even managed to outstrip such media mammoths as CNN by using a very simple technique: it installed a mobile television unit on Independence Square in Kyiv and took a satellite channel on lease. Live broadcasts were freely available around the clock to any TV company in the world and any viewer with a satellite aerial. The whole world had an opportunity to watch the revolution in Ukraine.

Yushchenko's campaign had one more unique peculiarity: its funding was limited. Unlike the opposition movements in other former USSR Republics, there were quite a few big and influential businessmen on the Yushchenko team. And they contributed a good deal of money. But we should not forget about dozens of criminal cases against the business structures that supported Yushchenko, about tax raids on their offices, about their frozen bank accounts. To their credit, none of them backed down.

According to expert calculations, the Yanukovich team spent between \$900M and \$1,500M on the election campaign. The Yushchenko staff's expenses were estimated at \$50M. That is, Yushchenko's campaign was 20-30 times more efficient than Yanukovich's. These figures are not exact, of course. Both staffs have admitted to facts of embezzlement. But the number of such cases was unequal, and the comparison was not in Yanukovich's favor.

And finally, the most distinctive feature of Yushchenko's campaign was the fact that for the first time in modern Ukrainian (and perhaps European) history, the winner in the presidential race stayed out of it for a long period. At the decisive moment of the campaign, the team was left without its leader. Investigators have yet to track down those who poisoned Yushchenko. But this criminal case also has definite political implications. Yushchenko was the main political resource of the opposition movement, and his canvassing tours were the basic component of his pre-election campaign due to his charisma, sociability, and attractive appearance. Opinion polls showed clearly that Yushchenko's popularity rating grew in the regions he visited.

Yushchenko's poisoning beat that trump card of his. The opposition leader left the field for seven weeks, and the pre-election campaign was actually reduced to medical reports. Pro-government politicians and mass media were delving in Yushchenko's previous medical diagnoses and histories. While Yushchenko was exhibited as "sick and weak," Yanukovich was flaunting his muscle. He declared a pension raise and demonstrated "increased care" for the people; in October there was hardly a section of the population that his government had not sopped.

It is silly to ask why the government began to care for the people right before the presidential election, or why instead of indexing and raising pensions legislatively, the government only paid a one-shot allowance. The implication is evident; the Yanukovich government followed the scheme that had been used in Kuchma's campaign in 1999 and in many election campaigns in Russia. Trying to keep power in their hands, pro-government candidates had simply meted out such "bonuses" to voters. In plain English this is called "graft."

It was undoubtedly a very effective move that added quite a lot to Yanukovich's popularity rating, largely owing to old pensioners, who naturally think of their own today rather than the country's tomorrow. The Yushchenko team found themselves in deep water: their leader was laid up, and it was extremely difficult to play on the opponent's half of the

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Self-conceit has never done anyone good. Nor did it help Yanukovych much. The Yushchenko staff managed to show the people that they received one-shot allowances and not raised pensions. The discovery substantially undermined their trust in the pro-government candidate. According to opinion polls, 70 percent of Ukrainians were sure then that the additional allowances were just a promotional move.

Yanukovych's further moves also followed Russian political managers' advice. He pledged to give Russian the status of a state language and introduced dual citizenship in Ukraine. After the incident in Ivano-Frankivsk [where he collapsed after an egg hit him in the chest], he reduced the itinerary of his canvassing tours to the southern and eastern regions where he enjoyed wide popularity. Such moves actually deprived him of the moral right to claim the title of an "all-Ukrainian" president. Yanukovych finally and irreversibly became the candidate of Ukraine's eastern part. His potential electorate in other parts of the country was sort of disoriented, and so his possibilities were substantially reduced.

Using this opportunity, the Yushchenko team drove the then Prime Minister into a narrow electoral corner, leaving him without national status. Yanukovych did not resist much - he felt so much more comfortable in his sweet home parts than in Kyiv. And Yushchenko, with a good deal of effort, managed to get rid of his imposed "western-bred" image. Eventually, as the returns of the December 26 poll showed, he won in 17 regions [out of 25] (but for some vote-fixing in Yanukovych's favor, the number would have been 18).

But the most striking and decisive peculiarity was the Ukrainian people themselves. In spite and defiance of total pressure and brainwashing, they did not only vote their own way but also proved their ability to defend their suffrage right and freedom.

Awakening Society

The orange revolution overturned the principal postulates of Marxism, according to which revolutions are made by the proletariat or other classes, who have nothing to lose but their chains. Marx also said that there had to be ripe socio-economic preconditions for a revolution. In other words, a revolution can only break out when poverty reaches a critical level.

On the other hand, the orange revolution confirmed another Marxist thesis: only financial independence makes a man really free. Without belittling the role played by people in other walks of life, give credit to the students as the most active fighters for freedom. We must admit that the main social basis and locomotive force of this revolution was the emergent middle class.

These people tied orange ribbons to expensive and cheap cars. They had enough money to feel independent and even donate some to the tent camp [on Khreshchatyk Street]. Being aware of sure losses, many of them suspended business and came to Kyiv. Many brought money, clothes, and food. All-in-all, about UAH 20 million [\$3.75M] was donated. The quantity and worth of food, tents, mattresses, warm clothes, and medicines can hardly be calculated. Nor can that aid be overestimated.

The Yushchenko team did prepare for mass actions. Direct communication with voters during mass rallies and improvised meetings was one of the main components in Yushchenko's pre-election campaign. The society was gradually "stirring up," and the team was accumulating experience. The Yushchenko staff spent about three weeks to organize the [July 4, 2004] rally in Kyiv in support of Yushchenko's nomination as a candidate. And it took three days to stage a 100,000-strong rally on November 6.

The mass actions played a significant role. The Ukrainian people gradually came to understand that it was quite normal to demonstrate political views on streets, that it was normal to bring children along, that each participant in such rallies got a colossal charge of positive energy.

It was strategically important to involve as many Kyiv residents as possible. As is known, elections are made in provinces, and revolutions are made in capital cities. So it happened. The mass rally for fair elections near the building of the Central Election Commission counted more than 100,000 participants. Very few of them were invited or brought from the provinces. Most were ordinary residents of the capital city driven by their own hearts.

Such strong support inspired hopes that Kyiv residents would support actions of protest against election fraud at least morally, if not in person. As we know, Yushchenko collected about 80 percent of votes in Kyiv, and hundreds of thousands came to Independence Square during the orange revolution.

It is hard to say if Yushchenko was ready for such large scale popular actions. On the one hand, his election staff had considerable experience in organizing and directing mass actions. Besides, sociological surveys showed a twofold increase (from 10 percent to 19 percent) in the number of those who were ready to protest against election fraud. On the other hand, it was clear that those who patronized and promoted Yanukovych would stop at nothing to secure his victory. So the Yushchenko team knew that people would take to the streets. But no one was prepared for such a formidable mass of protesters.

So what made them take to streets? Our previous studies of the odds and likely motives of participation in mass protest actions gave little ground for optimism: two years ago the bulk of Ukrainians were not ready to fight for their rights on streets. The farthest they were ready to go was to vote against the authorities and discuss political problems in their kitchens. If worst came to worst, they would rather emigrate from this country.

The orange revolution showed that much had changed since then. The authorities' outright defiance of law and insolence toward people brought the situation to the breaking point. Polls showed that it was not social or economic reasons that impelled the people to demonstrate on Independence Square. The people protested against the regime that trampled their rights and they stood up in defense of democracy and justice.

The people no longer wanted to live in fear and would bear no more humiliation. The authorities stepped over the ultimate line. When Yushchenko spoke on European Square on September 18 with ugly marks of poisoning on his once handsome face, the people were confused and scared at first: "If they did this to him, what can they do to me?" Then there was anger: "How can they do this?" And then one thought began to dominate: "No way! We want to live a different life, and we will!"

When millions of Ukrainians saw that the authorities had impudently stolen votes from Yushchenko, they just would not tolerate such humiliation anymore. Hopefully, it was a good lesson for all officials - from ministers to clerks. The nation has learned this lesson well. Now the people know what to do if, God forbid, their opinion is ever disregarded again.

There is one more question. Was the rerun that necessary? Could the same have been achieved sooner and by forcible means? Yes, it could. But at a closer look we can see that the forcible way was too perilous. The only thing Ukraine would have gained was time. But it could have lost a lot more.

At that moment it was easy as pie to seize power - it was just lying prone under Yushchenko's feet, and all he had to do was pick it up, i.e. walk into the presidential office. But it would have been far more difficult to use and retain power. The levers of executive authority would have worked only in the regions where Yushchenko had won.

A coup d'état would have given Ukraine an illegitimate president, who would not have been recognized in the eastern and southern regions, predominantly inhabited by Russian-speaking supporters of Yanukovych. And it would have taken a lot more effort, time, and money to mend the resultant split country together. Such a president would not have been recognized by Russia as well as most European nations and even the USA, and it would have taken years to restore the image and authority of this country and its leadership.

And finally, a forcible scenario was fraught with bloodshed. Besides, as one of Yushchenko's closest allies and "field commanders" Taras Stetskiv put it, "Yushchenko in his heart is not a revolutionist."

The legitimate way - the court proceedings, the rerun and repeat vote, then another court session - certainly took a while. But time was the price Yushchenko had to pay for the legitimacy of his election. And now Yushchenko has officially established and recognized support from 52 percent of Ukrainian citizens, which clears the way for long-awaited transformations. Moreover and most importantly, the president can rely on the people for the first time since independence in 1991.

Those 17 days taught us all to live in a different way - freely, with lifted heads and straight shoulders. While Kyiv was in the focus of international news reports, negotiations, and debates, while the interests of Moscow, Brussels, and Washington clashed around Kyiv, the Ukrainians were preoccupied with their own important problems.

Now Yushchenko has a unique chance to materialize the ideas written on his campaign slogans. We all have a chance to be respected and honored by our children and grandchildren. Whether this chance is used or missed depends on the very first steps that Yushchenko and his team will take.

Problems to Begin with

The main problem facing the new president is the moral split of the country. Both candidates built their campaigns on contrast: Yushchenko contrasted "bandits" with "honest people" while Yanukovych divided Ukrainians into "sorts," depending on the region they lived in. Too many residents of eastern and southern regions still refuse to recognize the new president. Too many are still under the spell of stereotypes like "valenki [felt boots] made in the USA" or Yushchenko's intention to "fence the Donetsk region with barbed wire."

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Another problem is the new staff policy at all levels - from the Cabinet of Ministers to district administrations. Special attention should be paid to law enforcement and tax structures. The country's course is about to be changed, and the country needs entirely new people to follow a new course.

The people, who stood on Independence Square day and night, in snow and rain, would simply be surprised to see the same grafters, embezzlers, and oppressors of business in their chairs. The problem is that too many chameleons have changed their former colors to orange.

This problem equally involves the need to reinstate everyone who was unlawfully fired for political reasons from their former positions. And this especially concerns a great number of law enforcement officers, who sided with the protesting people. If they do not get their jobs back, the new leadership, which has given them this promise, will never enjoy popular trust.

The new president also faces the problem of high hopes and expectations, because his victory cost a very high price. His image of an honest politician gives Yushchenko no right to use the methods that were used by his predecessors. First of all, it is about political or any other deals under the table, political censorship, and abuse of authority.

The people's high hopes and expectations put the new president into a bind: he has to carry out strategic programs through controversial and unpopular tactics. Some strategic decisions may naturally entail short-term negative effects while the people expect material improvements today.

Yushchenko has to live up to his promises. But having too little time to fulfill his plans, he may fall into his own trap. Moreover, the 2006 parliamentary race is around the corner, and unpopular steps may leave Yushchenko without support in the future parliament.

Yushchenko must be aware that the presidency is anything but an easy ride. If he really tries, he can find good solutions to all problems. He only has to remember that his main resources today are the popular trust and enthusiasm, which make him a unique president. If he loses them, he is doomed to share the fate of his predecessors.

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